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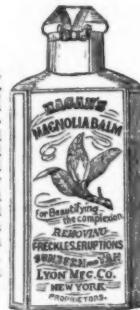
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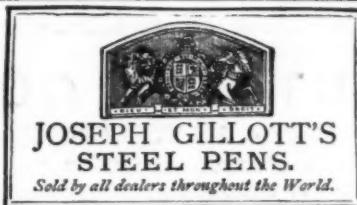
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A SILENT WITNESS.

BY EDMUND YATES.

AUTHOR OF “BLACK SHEEP,” “CASTAWAY,” “THE YELLOW FLAG,” &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER VI. COMING OF AGE.

“GRACE had a letter from England this morning,” said Madame Sturm, as she sat, placidly sipping her coffee, one afternoon, with Anne acting as her companion, and reading out such scraps from the newspaper as she thought might interest the old lady; “a letter from the lawyers, on that dreadful blue paper, and in that horrible round-hand which always reminds one of Chancery Lane. There was a young man—such a handsome fellow he was—but, I recollect, he didn’t wear any shirt-collar, only a black-satin stock, rather frayed with rubbing under his chin, and two large pins in it, tied together by a little chain. He was a clerk in our bank in the old days, before my poor brother took the management, and he used to see me sometimes come in the carriage, to fetch father away, and he became rather smitten with me, poor fellow. I forgot his name now; but I can see him just as though it were yesterday.” The old lady placed her coffee-cup upon the table, and fell into a reverie, slowly passing one hand over the other and looking straight before her. “What could have made me think of him now, after so many years?” said she, rousing herself. “Oh! I recollect. He grew bold enough to send me some letters, and they were all written on that blue paper, and in that same round-hand, and he called me, ‘Dear Miss;’ only he wrote ‘Dear’ ‘Dr.’ just as though I had been a physician, don’t you know; and then it was found out, and all put

a stop to. Did Grace show you the letter, my love?”

“Yes, Madame Sturm,” cried Anne; “I have just returned it to her.”

“Oh, then you know all about it?” said the old lady. “The time is fast approaching now when I shall have to lose my niece. She will be a great lady; and, I suppose, like all the rest of the world, will forget her humble friends.”

“I don’t think that is likely,” said Anne, warmly; “and you will allow that in such a matter I may speak from experience.”

“You are quite right, my dear; and I am an old fool for giving utterance to such a sentiment; but I am not very strong either in mind or body now, I think, and I’m beginning to get anxious about that dear girl’s future. You have discussed it often with her, I suppose?”

“Yes,” said Anne; “it is constantly present to both our minds; and the responsibility which will devolve upon dear Grace is so great, that I, at least, cannot contemplate it calmly.”

“Nor I, my love,” said the old lady. “The only one thing which reconciles me to it, is the knowledge that she will have you at her right hand to counsel and guide her.”

“I am sorry to tell you that you must give up that idea, dear Madame Sturm,” said Anne, laying aside the newspaper. “Grace and I have talked it over thoroughly, and I have proved to her that, however much I might wish it, it will be impossible for me to accompany her to England.”

“Impossible for you to go with her?” said the Frau Professorin, in alarm. “Why, what can be the reason of that?”

“Some private family matters, with

which I need not trouble you," said Anne, coldly.

"Oh, indeed," said Madame Sturm, shortly. "Something about those bothering Wallers, I suppose?" Then, relaxing a little in her tone, she added—"Well, I call that a great blow. I had thoroughly counted upon your being with her; and it was the only comfort I had."

"I do not think I need tell you how keenly I feel it," said Anne; "but we have talked it all out, and, though Grace would not hear of it at first, she is now half reconciled to the idea, in thinking that, for some time, at least, I shall be able to remain with you."

"You are a sweet angel, Waller," said the old lady rapturously, bending forward her face for Anne to kiss; "and in my wretched state of health are of the greatest possible comfort to me. So long as I live, you shall never want a home; but your heart will naturally be with Grace, and I should have thought myself a horribly selfish old woman to keep you away from her. However, as these bothering Wallers prevent your going, that part of the question is settled. What we have to think of now is who shall be Grace's companion?"

"Grace was about to suggest, and I am therefore breaking no confidence in mentioning it," said Anne, "that the professor should go with her to London, and remain with her there, at least for a short time."

"The professor!" cried the old lady; "why, what are the girls thinking about! Who is to undertake his lectures, and what is to become of me?"

"I shall remain behind to take care of you, dear Madame Sturm," said Anne; "and as for the lectures, one of the professor's colleagues could act for him in his absence, and the little change and rest would do him undoubtedly good."

"That is quite true," said the old lady, meditatively; "I have been thinking for a long time past that the professor has been working too hard. There is no reason why he should go grinding on morning and night at the university, for we have quite enough money to keep us in peace and comfort. But the idea of him going to London! He is the simplest-minded, and most easily-bothered man that ever was; and London, even in my time, was a dazing place, but now, what with underground railways, and Thames embankments, and things of that sort, I cannot imagine what it must be like."

"You must remember," said Anne, with a smile, "that Grace has a perfectly clear head of her own, and, in all every-day worldly matters, is quite capable of taking care of herself. Where business is concerned she will have the advice and assistance of the lawyers, Messrs. Hillman and Hicks, and also of the trustees to her uncle's will, under whose management the bank is now conducted. It will be necessary that she should have some one connected with her—that she should not be alone in fact—that is all."

"I see what you mean, my dear," said the old lady, with a laugh, "'a figure-head,' as my poor mother used to call it; and the professor will do very well for that. The only question is, whether he will go?"

"There Grace counts upon your persuasion, dear Madame Sturm," said Anne. "He would find himself in a new world, whither his reputation had preceded him, and no doubt would be heartily welcome amongst the scientific men of London."

"Some years ago he often used to express a wish to visit England," said the old lady; "but he is no longer a young man, though, no doubt, as you say, the pleasure of finding himself known to celebrated people would act as an incentive to him, for we are all of us vain, my dear, more or less; and I sometimes think that I ought not to grumble about my poor health, as, without it, I might have fallen into many temptations." And the Frau Professorin smoothed her soft grey hair as she spoke, and contemplated her features in the looking-glass with a deprecatory smile.

The idea thus struck out was not suffered to slumber. That same evening, when the worthy old professor's heart had been cheered by a good supper and a bottle of Rauenthaler, and when he had lapsed into a dreamy state in listening to a selection of simple Scotch and Irish melodies which Anne had been playing to him, and which he dearly loved, the impossibility of Mrs. Waller's accompanying her friend to London was laid before him, and the suggestion made that he should go in her stead.

That such a notion should be broached at all astonished him, but that it should emanate from the Frau Professorin, to whose apron-string, according to the familiar saying, he was supposed to be tied, transcended his powers of belief. He was far too much overwhelmed to give any

definite answer at once, and his companions, knowing his peculiarities, were content to allow him to ramble on in an historical account of the Royal Society, and discourse on English literary and scientific celebrities, until bedtime. It was evident that the idea was not displeasing to the old gentleman, and the next day the Frau Professorin called into council two or three of her husband's colleagues, who, properly indoctrinated, took the opportunity of proving to him that his lectures could be easily arranged for; and that his visit would not merely be a source of pleasure to himself, but of honour to the university, of which he would be looked upon as a kind of non-official representative. The intercourse between the commercial men of Germany and England is constant and unlimited, but the personal relations of "scientists" and littérateurs are still restricted; opportunities of intercourse are not frequently offered, but, when offered, are eagerly seized upon. Thus Herr Pastor Buddé wished to be made acquainted with the style of Dean Stanley's preaching, and Herr Regierungs-rath Holthausen yearned for an exposition of Lor' Cock Burn's sentiments on probate law; Hof Arzt Kraft could give Wilhelm Jenner a few wrinkles on the treatment of typhoid fever, and Landwehr Commandant von Stuterheim was anxious that the Herzog von Cambridge should know his opinions on the respective merits of Krupp and Armstrong ordnance; and each and all of these gentlemen had the intention of making Professor Sturm the medium of their ideas. Urged on, first by his wife and then by his colleagues, and pleased with the notion of temporarily entering upon an entirely novel existence, in which he should play no undistinguished part, the old gentleman determined to accompany his niece to England, and at once began making preparations for his departure.

"It will be hard work parting with you again, darling, after being so closely and so constantly together," said Grace to her friend on the evening when this decision had been arrived at; "but there is no help for it, and we must accept the inevitable as best we can."

"Not in all your other goodness and kindness to me," said Anne, putting her arm round Grace's neck, "has your trust been so thoroughly shown, as by your acceptance of my assurance of the necessity

for silence, in regard to that portion of my life which occurred between our parting at school, and our meeting at Paris. I would give all I possess—little enough, Heaven knows, and entirely owing to your bounty," she added, with a smile, "to go with you now; but it is impossible; and you must accept the fact without asking for an explanation."

"I do accept it," said Grace, "and ask no more; my one comfort is in thinking that I shall not be so very long away from you, for as soon as business matters are arranged I shall leave London, and we can either continue to live on here, or go for a year's travel, as we may think fit."

"You are not making allowance for all the attractions which will await the young heiress in the world of fashion," said Anne, with a sad smile. "It would be unnatural, indeed, if you, with all the advantages which wealth and beauty can command, should abnegate your position and waste the brightest period of your life."

"It would be absurd of me to sneer at temptations of which I know nothing," said Grace, "but the anticipation of them certainly never occupied my thoughts. I shall stop in London, I suppose, because the lawyers and business people will want me there; but I do not imagine that my arrival will cause any great excitement in the fashionable world."

"You are an heiress, which in itself will render it quite sufficient for you to be sought after; but in addition to that, there are many of your uncle's friends who will be anxious to make things pleasant to you. You will—you will go to Loddonford, I think you said?" she added, with an irrepressible tremble in her voice.

"Oh, most certainly not," said Grace promptly, and without noticing her friend's emotion. "My poor uncle laid so many plans for our mutual happiness there, that I could never think of it without recurring to him, and all the details of that horrible tragedy, which, for the first few months, haunted me night and day, and which I seem only just to have forgotten, would return. I shall give instructions to have the place sold, and never let its name be mentioned before me."

"There you are right," said Anne. "There is no reason why you should retain any link to bind you to a disagreeable past; your future, thank Heaven, bids fair to be bright enough, and with that you should occupy your thoughts."

"And the most pleasurable part of it is that it will be passed with you," said Grace, affectionately.

"We will not speculate too much upon that, little one," said Anne, stroking her friend's shining curls. "The natural future of all girls is marriage—the happy future, I firmly believe, of many." Her voice shook a little as she spoke. "But," she continued, "it is impossible to assure it, we are told; but what is possible you possess. A husband will come for you, my darling, and take you away from me, and rendering you a source of happiness to him, and others to come after you."

"And you also, Anne," said Grace, earnestly; "why should not such a lot be yours?"

"Why not?—for—for many reasons, pet. I must be the maiden-aunt to your children, and contented enough in that."

"I think you are talking very absurdly," said Grace, suddenly. "I don't see any necessity for my being married; I am sure I have never seen anyone yet that I could care about."

"That is because the right 'anyone' has not yet presented himself," said Anne. "I can understand your being heart-proof against the admiration of Paul Fischer, and remaining unsubdued by the fascinations of little Dr. Krafft; but the conquering hero is yet to come. *Qui que tu sois voila ton maitre*—you, with your beauty and riches, are most unlikely to form an exception to the rule."

"Well," said Grace, with a blush and a smile, "it will be time enough to talk of the 'hero' when he arrives. Whoever he may be, I am certain of one thing, that I shall never love him as I love you, and the first condition of my accepting him, would be that you and I should not be separated."

"We will consider these points, as you say, dear, all in good time," said Anne, faintly smiling; "but, from all that one has heard, a husband never fancies his wife's friends; and the closer the intimacy, the less likely are they to find favour in his eyes."

"My husband will have to do as I choose," said Grace, tossing her head; "and I shall take care that 'those lawyers,' as Aunt Sturm calls them, give me proper authority over my own affairs. What are you smiling at, Anne?"

"At the confident way in which you are speaking, darling. 'He jests at scars who never felt a wound;' and you, who

have never yet had Love's yoke laid upon you, cannot comprehend the possibility of subjugation. You will think differently some day, little one."

"One would think you spoke out of the plenitude of your own experience, Anne," said Grace. But her friend did not reply to her, and the conversation dropped.

The resolution to part with her property at Loddonford, which Grace had adopted, and which she clung to with unwavering tenacity, had given Anne Studley very great satisfaction. She would not have originated the idea: firstly, because she had laid down for herself the strict rule never to interfere, even by a suggestion, in the management of Grace's business matters; and, secondly, lest on such a subject she might be led by her anxiety to betray so much interest as to awaken suspicion. In all their communings, Anne had never given her friend the least hint as to the place where her father had resided. Beyond the fact that it was in a country village somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Thames, Grace knew nothing; and as she reiterated her determination of parting with the lovely villa, where her banker-uncle had dispensed so much renowned hospitality, Anne felt relieved from any apprehension that her friend should discover any part of the truth by being resident in the accursed neighbourhood. Not that there was any danger, Anne thought, of Grace's coming across her father—it could be no part of the captain's scheme to continue to reside in a place, which, even to his dulled moral sense, must be filled with horrible reminiscences, and fraught with peril. Thus the dread of encountering him had not wholly actuated her in her strong resolution not to accompany her friend to England. It was not likely, she thought, that the captain, once abroad, would give up a life on the Continent—which, as he had told her, was agreeable to him—and return to a place where he would be under the surveillance, and at the beck-and-call, of his more daring and more prosperous associate in crime; for that Heath's absence had been only temporary, and that he had long since returned to London and resumed his position in the bank, Anne knew for a certainty. His name, as has been said, was never mentioned between the friends. Grace knew that—for some reason of which she was ignorant, and into which her delicacy and sisterly feeling did not allow her to inquire—any reference to it was

painful to Anne; but the periodical letters from the lawyers, which the young heiress always handed to her friend, were filled with complimentary allusions to the ability and steadiness manifested by Mr. Heath, under whom the affairs of the bank were more prosperous even than in Mr. Middleham's time, and it was perfectly evident that the "managing director," as he was now styled, possessed the confidence and goodwill of the trustees.

Of course a man like Captain Studley, who took care to be kept informed of everything in which his own comfort and safety were in the slightest degree concerned, would necessarily be acquainted with this state of affairs; and, as he had a holy horror of Heath, to whom he had confessed his inferiority in scoundrelism, he would naturally keep away, to avoid anything which might lead to his falling into his late companion's clutches, and again becoming his tool. Anne felt, indeed, that there was more probability of her encountering her father on the Continent. There was no likelihood of his visiting such a place as Bonn, where there was neither pleasure nor business to attract him; but the travelling tour, which Grace had hinted at their taking after her return from London, had more possible elements of danger in it. That, however, would be an after consideration. The long interval of rest and peace which she had enjoyed, Grace's never-failing affection, and the regard and confidence bestowed upon her by those among whom she had lived for so many months, had had a quieting and salutary effect upon her once bruised and aching heart. The fear of pursuit and detection under which she laboured on her first arrival in Germany had now almost entirely left her. She no longer passed anxious hours of the day and night in wondering what had become of her father; and she could go through her daily task of reading the English newspapers to the Frau Professorin, without the omnipresent fear, which at first haunted her, of finding in them some record of the captain's discovery and disgrace.

Nor did she brood now, as she had erst been in the habit of doing, with sickening terror, over the details of Walter Danby's death. Time, the consoler, against whom we rail for blotting out from our memories the features of the lost loved ones, and the details of many happy bygone scenes, as a compensation, acts a beneficent part in throwing a haze over reminiscences of

former trouble and distress. The hideous scene which Anne Studley had witnessed came back rarely to her now, and then but as some fragment of a perturbed dream, vague and indistinct. The illness consequent upon her discovery, the fearful bargain wrung from her in her terror, its accomplishment, and her flight, all seemed as fantastic and unreal. A new life had commenced for her at her meeting with Grace, and, with the recollection of her troubles and her wrongs, had passed away her desire of avenging herself on those who had been the cause of her suffering. When she lay tossing on her feverish couch in the secluded house at Loddonford, her sole prayer had been for strength to bring down retribution upon Walter Danby's murderer; but that feeling had died out, and now she only prayed for a continuance of the peaceful life which she was leading. She had hoped to be forgotten, but better than that, she had learned to forget. That she was forgotten she had not a doubt. Both her father and the man who had the right to call himself her husband, when they found that her intentions were not openly hostile to them, when they had learned that her existence was not necessarily associated with the idea of danger to them, would soon let her lapse into oblivion. Throughout her life, with the exception of a few weeks, she had been as nothing to her father; and it was not likely that Mr. Heath, who seemed to have lived down any suspicion of his double crime, and to be immersed in prosperous business, would bestow a thought upon her. Not even, Anne imagined, would the sight of Grace, with whom he must necessarily be brought into contact, revive the suspicion of the managing director against her whom he had first met in company with the young heiress; and even were the recollection to arise in Heath's mind, Anne had no apprehensions for the result. She knew that Grace's discretion was as absolute as her devotion, and that she would never be betrayed into any avowal which might compromise her friend's safety, or reveal to another the secret which she herself had never sought to penetrate.

Tranquillity of mind had conduced to Anne Studley's bodily health, and her renewed vigour and stamina had contributed greatly to the improvement of her personal appearance. The look of sadness and suffering which illness had impressed on her countenance, and which so fas-

cinated the romantic Paul Fischer on her first arrival, had entirely disappeared. She was grave still, it is true, with a gravity beyond her years, but the Frau Professorin often declared that that was "Waller's style," and suited her better than any other; and, when particularly amused or pleased, her face would light up with a smile, which, from its very infrequency, was doubly pretty and doubly welcome. From the moment of their arrival at Bonn, Grace had insisted upon paying her friend a liberal salary, and Anne was thus enabled to dress well, in her quiet, simple taste, and was not ashamed to take her place among the visitors, from time to time gathered together at Madame Sturm's musical evenings. From one and all of these she received the utmost courtesy and consideration, for nowhere in the world is society pleasanter, less formal, and more thoroughly natural than in that class which occupies a middle position between the ennobled and the bourgeoisie in the German nation. It is possible that this arises as a reaction from the ridiculous pride and pompous vanity of the "vons," as well as from the beer-swilling boorishness of the lower classes; but be this as it may, it exists as a fact, and from the families of the professors and the professionals, of which Madame Sturm's society was composed, Anne, as the humble companion of the young heiress, received a welcome and a kindness such as she would have been a long time obtaining in England.

Nor was her popularity confined to the stocking-knitting dames and the dreary old gentlemen, who gathered round Madame Sturm's coffee-table and the professor's piano. With the young men she had a very great success; and, although the erratic Paul Fischer had long since transferred to another shrine that romantic devotion which he had imagined himself to have experienced at the first sight of Anne, but which he never had the courage to declare, there were many others on whom the grave and matured beauty of the young English girl had worked its due effect. Foremost amongst these was Franz Eckhardt, who, by nature very differently constituted from his younger, more impulsive, and more demonstrative companion, had in him much of that sweetness of disposition which, mingled with rugged honesty and stern fidelity, is so often found in the German character. To such a man the mixture of good looks

and good sense, of womanly sweetness and the power of comprehension and endurance, but rarely accorded to women, which Anne possessed, came as a new revelation. Never in his experience had he met with anyone so completely realising his idea of "a perfect woman nobly planned;" and, although somewhat slow of conviction, when he had once adopted this idea he held to it firmly, and determined to do his best to win Anne Studley for his wife. On one point, that of his power to maintain her in proper comfort, he was completely assured; for his father, who had been a brewer in a large way at Hamm, had died soon after Anne's arrival at Bonn, and Franz was his sole heir. Not for him, though, the vats and brewery, and all the sterling accessories of commerce; he had always determined to part with the business, and with the proceeds derived from the sale to lead a lazy dilettante life, occupying himself with painting and music, the two arts which he loved, and in the pursuit of which he excelled. If he could only get the English girl to share that life, what happiness there would be in store for him! He waited long, for he was modest and diffident, as are most brave men; but he took heart of grace at last and spoke to Anne, who, of course, rejected him—kindly, but decidedly. She gave him no gleam of hope, and he went out of her presence, saddened, but loving her as much, and respecting her perhaps even more.

And Anne Studley kept her own counsel, and added this last to the secrets already locked in her breast.

SNAKE WOMEN.

THOSE who delight in being in at the death of a good story, or in witnessing its dissolution into a myth, with that pleasure which destructive philosophers alone enjoy, may perhaps be interested in following the various mutations undergone by the Lamia story, and its curious adaptation to the mental wants of the middle ages. In ancient Greece no doubt was entertained as to the existence of snake women, who tapered off from a beautiful female torso into a colubrine lower extremity. Endowed with melodious voices, these land sirens—like their marine cousins—lured beautiful youths into the woods and devoured them. This is the crude form of the Lamia—a semi-serpentine witch, who tempted men to their destruction.

The next shape is that portrayed by Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius the philosopher*. Here we have Lycius, a handsome youth, strolling on the high road near Corinth, "thinking of nothing at all," when he becomes aware of a fair damsel, whom he discovers to be not only beautiful, but rich exceedingly, dwelling in a fine house in Corinth, surrounded by wealth and luxury. At their wedding feast enters Apollonius, who denounces the damsel as a Lamia, or serpent witch, and in spite of her entreaties, continues to speak on, till all at once the lady, the house, and all the show of gold and jewels within it, vanishes utterly. This thing, saith Philostratus, was known to many, for it was done in the middle of Greece.

Keats, taking hold of this story, recast it, and attracted the sympathy of the reader for the unfortunate Lamia, by making her, instead of a witch, a damsel temporarily thrown into a serpent form by enchantment, from which she is released by Hermes, only to expire at her marriage feast under the "glittering eye" of tough old Apollonius, who appears to have added to his profession of philosopher that of a witch diviner, and in that capacity would have been invaluable, both in Scotland and in Massachusetts, in the days when it was unsafe to be an old woman.

The Lamia of Keats is therefore a complete but beautiful perversion of the old faith concerning the Lamiae, who are always spoken of by the ancients with the greatest abhorrence.

More akin to the sentimental idea of the Lamia is the charming mediæval legend of the daughter of Ypocras—possibly Hippocrates, who ruled in the island of Cos, where the scene of the story is laid. According to the fourteenth century version: "Some men say that in the isle of Cos sits the daughter of Ypocras, in the form and likeness of a great dragon that is an hundred fathoms in length, as men say, for I have not seen her. And they of the isles call her the Lady of the Land. And she lyeth in an old castle, in a cave, and sheweth herself twice or thrice in the year. And she was thus changed and transformed, from a fair damsel into the likeness of a dragon, by a goddess called Diana. And men say that she shall so endure in that form of a dragon unto the time that a knight come, that is so brave that he dare come to her and kiss her on

the mouth, when she shall turn again to her own kind and be a woman again, but after that she shall not live long. And it is not long since that a knight of Rhodes, that was hardy and doughty in arms, said that he would kiss her. And when he was upon his courser, and went to the castle and entered into the cave, the dragon lifted up her head against him, and the knight, seeing her in that form so hideous and so horrible, he fled away. And the dragon bare the knight upon a rock—maugre his head—and from that rock she cast him into the sea, and so was lost both horse and man. Also a young man that wist not of the dragon went out of a ship, and went through the isle till he came to the castle and into the cave, and went so long till he found a chamber, and there he saw a damsel, that combed her head and looked in a mirror, and she had much treasure about her. And he abode till the damsel saw the shadow of him in the mirror. And she turned her towards him and asked him what he would? And he said if he would be her lover. She asked him if he were a knight, and he said nay. Then she said that he might not be her lover; but she bade him go again unto his fellows, and get him made a knight, and come again upon the morrow, and she would come out of the cave before him and he should then come and kiss her on the mouth. And said she, 'Have no dread, for I shall do thee no manner of harm, albeit that thou wilt see me in the likeness of a dragon. For though thou see me hideous and horrible to look upon, I would have thee to know that it is made by enchantment. For without doubt I am none other than thou seest now, a woman, and, therefore, dread thou naught. And if thou kiss me thou shalt have all this treasure, and be my lord, and lord also of all this isle.' And he departed from her and went to his fellows to ship and let them make him a knight, and came again upon the morrow for to kiss this damsel. But when he saw her coming out of the cave in form of a dragon—so hideous and so horrible—he had so great dread that he fled again to the ship, and she followed him. And when she saw that he turned not again, she began to cry, as a thing that had much sorrow; and then she turned again into her cave, and anon the knight died. And since then might no knight see her but that he died anon. But when a knight cometh who is so hardy as to kiss her, he shall not die; but he shall turn the damsel

into her right form and kindly shape, and he shall be lord of all the countries and isles abovesaid."

It is curious to observe that in this story the ancient Lamia myth is completely transformed. All our sympathies are enlisted by the daughter of Ypocras, while the fate of the knights who could not pluck up courage to embrace a dragon two hundred yards long, excites no compassion whatever. Her cry of despair, "as a thing that had much sorrow," is the crowning incident, and the death of a few knights—more or less—is passed over with complete indifference.

Strangely enough, the next kindred story occurs in the annals of the Plantagenet family, and here again the transformed woman is the ill-used person. The early Plantagenets could hardly be designated amiable princes. Their existence was cheered and enlivened by parricide, abduction, sacrilege, mutilation, and other pastimes of a like inspiriting character. The intensity of hate which they bore each other exceeded ordinary family spite, as the fury of a Berserk excels the poorest quality of Dutch courage. In the indulgence of this mutual hatred they gloried, esteeming it a noble tradition of the family, and by all means to be kept up. One day a priest came, cross in hand, to Geoffrey, son of Henry the Second, begging him to become reconciled to his father, and not to imitate Absalom. "What!" said the young prince, "do you wish me to waive my birthright?" "God forbid, my lord," replied the priest, "I wish you no harm." "You do not comprehend me," said the Count of Brittany. "It is the destiny of our family not to love each other. This is our heritage, and not one of us will ever renounce it." The grandfather of this agreeable youth, also a Geoffrey Plantagenet, drew upon himself, on the occasion of his cruelly maltreating a bishop, the severe remark of St. Bernard, "From the devil he came; to the devil he will go." Now St. Bernard was far too great a master of language to use such a sentence as this, without some special reason, and the neatness of the application will be learned from the following legend. Far back in the history of the Plantagenets lived an ancient Countess of Anjou. She appears to have been an excellent wife, but "peculiar in her ways." She never went to mass, and had a custom of slipping off quietly

by herself, no man knew whither. The husband, instead of letting her have her own way—like a sensible man—fretted and fumed himself into a fever of curiosity and jealousy. Catching her one day, just as she was preparing to make off by herself, he took it into his head to order four of his squires to hold her fast. A terrible scene took place. Leaving her mantle in the hands of those who vainly essayed to retain her, and leaving as well two of her children rolled up in its folds, she seized the remaining pair of olive branches, vanished through the window, and was never seen again.

This warning to inquisitive husbands recalls very strongly the story of Melusine—be the same of Poitou or of Dauphiny—the progenetrix of the noble house of Lusignan. Brantôme, in his life of Charles of Bourbon, Count of Montpensier, relates that the Queen Mother—Catharine de Médicis—to whose service he was particularly attached, after arranging a truce between two of her hopeful brood, took a fancy to go somewhat out of her way to visit the ruins of the Castle of Lusignan, a Huguenot stronghold, destroyed a few years before by Montpensier. It appears that the ruins of Lusignan were magnificent, for Brantôme—after the method of Thucydides and Sallust—inserts a long speech, or rather lament, of Catharine over the destruction of the "antique pearl of all the king's palaces." "I had never seen it," said the queen, "except when I was very young, and passed by it on the way to Perpignan, but on account of my youth did not then form that impression of its beauty and grandeur which I now receive from its ruins."

"Behold," continues Brantôme, "the pitifulness and ruin of this place. More than forty years ago, I heard an old veteran say that when the Emperor Charles the Fifth came to France, they brought him to Lusignan for the delectable pastime of hunting the deer, which in this, one of the most beautiful and ancient parks of France, were in great numbers. He never tired of admiring and praising the beauty, size, and superb workmanship of this palace, built (what is more) by a certain lady, concerning whom he made them tell him several fabulous tales, which are there known to all, even to the good old women who washed out the lye at the fountain, whom the Queen Mother would also question and listen to.

"Some of these said that they saw her

sometimes come to the fountain, to bathe in it, in the form of a very beautiful woman, and in the dress of a widow. Others said that they saw her, but very rarely, and that on Saturday at the hour of vespers (for while in that state she did not let herself be seen), bathing, half of her body being that of a beautiful lady, and the other half a serpent. Some said that they saw her fully dressed, walking with very grave majesty, and others that she appeared on the top of her great tower as a beautiful woman, and as a serpent. Some said that when any great disaster was about to come upon the kingdom, or a change of reign, or death or misfortune to any of her relations—the greatest in France, even kings—three days before she was heard to cry three times with a very shrill and terrible cry. This is held to be perfectly true. Several persons of that place, who have heard it, are positive, and hand it down from father to son; and also when the siege took place, many soldiers and gentlemen of honour who were there, confirmed it. But above all, when the sentence was passed to throw down and ruin her castle, she uttered her loudest cries and wails. This is very true, on the testimony of honest folk. Since then she has not been heard. A few old wives, however, say that she has appeared, but very rarely.

"Finally, and in positive truth, she was, in her time, a very wise and virtuous lady, both as wife and widow, from whom sprang those brave and generous princes of Lusignan, who by their valour made themselves Kings of Cyprus, among the chief of whom was Geoffrey Big-tooth, who was represented as of lofty stature on the portal of the great tower."

Thus far Brantôme, who is disposed to treat Melusine—snaky or not—with all fitting honour; a feeling also expressed in a very characteristic way by several great families. The houses of Luxembourg, Rohan, and Sassenaye altered their pedigrees in order to claim descent from Melusine; and the Emperor Henry the Seventh felt especial pride in being able to number among his ancestors the beautiful colubrine bride of Raymond of Poitou.

Oddly enough, some of the lady's own undoubted descendants, actual members of the house of Lusignan, displayed a singular want of appreciation of the qualities of their ancestress, and tried very hard to shuffle off the snaky coil. A certain doctor

of theology, one of the order of preaching friars, the Reverend Father Stephen of Cyprus, of the royal house of Lusignan—immensely penetrated with the grandeur of his family—produced a volume of genealogies, wherein he, after a certain clumsy critical fashion, tries to demolish the supernatural character of Melusine. The reverend father does not for a moment doubt the possibility of fairies and transformations. There were many of them, he says, both in England, Spain, and France, "who were nothing more than downright devilish sorceresses," allowed to work their wicked will by the permission of God, because "the people were infidels." "They transformed themselves," continues Father Stephen, "sometimes into queens, sometimes into animals, and caused themselves to be greatly loved, by the aid of the devil, who fascinated and deceived the eyes of those who had not the knowledge of God. And what those did formerly the sorceresses of to-day (1587) do much more, but not to those who believe faithfully and firmly in God, and give by active works sufficient proof of their faith." It was, then, not the supernatural that Father Stephen objected to. His main difficulty appears to have been with his precious genealogies, wherein he could not or would not find a place for his Ophidian ancestress.

A couple of hundred years before the time of Father Stephen, Jean d'Arras, secretary to the Duke of Berry, received orders to collect all the information extant concerning Melusine, and in the course of his labours "interviewed" the Sire de Serville, who defended the Castle of Lusignan for the English against the Duke of Berry. In the presence of that prince, the said Serville swore upon his faith and honour that three days before the surrender of the castle there entered into his chamber (though the doors were shut) a large serpent, enamelled blue and white, which struck its tail several times against the foot of the bed whereon he was lying with his wife, who was not at all frightened at it, although he was very considerably so; and that, when he seized his sword, the serpent changed all at once into a woman, and said to him, "How, Serville, you who have been in so many battles and sieges, are you afraid? Know that I am mistress of this castle, which I built, and that soon you will have to surrender it." When she had ended these words she resumed her

serpent shape, and glided away so swiftly that he could not perceive her.

Collecting all the information he could, Jean d'Arras found among other things that the mysterious Melusine came from beyond sea, from the Islands of the Sirens which lie beyond Gaul, that is to say, the British Islands. According to his charming book, a certain king of Albany (Scotland)* became a widower, and going out hunting one day in a forest near the sea, he was overcome with a great thirst, and bent his steps towards a certain beautiful fountain. Approaching this, his ears were saluted by delightful sounds, and dismounting from his horse, he crept gradually towards the fountain, and there beheld the most beautiful lady he had ever seen in his life. He was so entirely overcome by the beauty of the lady and the melody of her voice that he forgot all about the hunt, and—wondrous in a Scot—forgot that he was thirsty; indeed he was so enchanted that he did not know whether it was day or night, whether he was awake or asleep.

After a stately courtship the king married the lady, who exacted from him a promise that when she presented him with an addition to his family he would on no pretence visit her, but would studiously keep out of her way. It appears, however, that King Elinas was rather a feather-headed person, for when his fairy queen Pressina gave birth to three little girls at once, Melusine, Meliora, and Palatina, and his son Nathas brought him the news of this happy event, he immediately dashed off to see the babies, and came into the room where Pressina was bathing them. He was not well received. Pressina reproached him bitterly with breaking his covenant, thus bringing ill-luck on himself and consigning her to everlasting perdition; and, catching up her three children, disappeared from his sight for ever.

Now it came to pass that Pressina betook herself to the Isle of Avalon, called the Lost Island, and brought up her three daughters to the age of fifteen. Every morning she took them up on a high mountain, whence they could see the country of Ybernie (Hibernia), and, bewailing her sad fate, at length revealed to them the story of their father's folly. Melusine and her sisters determined to revenge their

mother's wrongs, and being half-bred fairies, caught the thoughtless king and chained him in the heart of the mountain "Brumbelijs in Northumbelande." When they informed their mother of this pretty piece of work, she raised a fearful outcry, and like a forgiving wife and a good mother, proceeded to punish her children all round. Palatina was shut up in the mountain Guigo with all her father's treasure, until should come a knight of her kindred who should deliver her, possess the treasure, and conquer the country. Meliora was banished to a castle in Armenia, where she was to watch a falcon till judgment-day; while such knights as should come and also watch by it through the twentieth day of June without slumbering, should have their wish in all worldly things except in taking Meliora to wife; but in the event of their expressing this wish, would be unlucky even unto the ninth generation.

Melusine—because, as her mamma said, she was the eldest of the triplet, and therefore "of all of them ought to have known better"—was condemned to be every Saturday a snake from the waist downwards; but if she could find a man to marry her, and who would faithfully keep his promise never to look upon her on that day, she should run her course of life like an ordinary woman; but, if deceived by her husband, should wear her snaky shape once a week till the day of judgment. Going sadly on her way, Melusine wandered amid the woods and fountains of Poitou, where fell out this strange adventure. Aymery, Count of Poitou, a great nobleman, had adopted Raymond, the younger son of the Count de la Forêt, a poor but not otherwise undeserving relative. While out boar hunting one day, this handsome youth and the Count of Poitou became separated from their attendants, and having pursued the boar into the depths of the forest of Colombiers, lost both him and their way, and, as night came on, were fain to camp out. Gazing up at the sky, the Count Aymery told Raymond that, by reading the stars, he knew that the subject who at that moment slew his lord would become a great and powerful prince, the founder of a line of kings. Hereat arose a great noise, and a huge wild boar appeared on the scene. The huntsmen were so completely taken by surprise, that they made a clumsy attack upon the beast; the count was overthrown, and Raymond rushed at the boar with his

* There were in the later middle ages no less than three Albanias: one the ancient Epirus; one Northern Russia, including part of Siberia; and another, that indicated in the text, Scotland.

sword, which, glancing off his tough hide, transfixes the unfortunate count. With another stroke he laid the boar at his feet, and then perceived that his friend and adopted father was dead. Overcome with horror, Raymond sprang on his horse and rode desperately away, not knowing whither he went. At last he reached a beautiful glade bathed in soft moonlight, where, at the foot of a mighty rock, sprang up a fairy fountain. Around the fountain were sporting three beautiful damsels, of whom she who appeared to be the chief advanced to meet the strange huntsman. To this beautiful creature Raymond unfolded his horrible adventure, when the serpentine side of Melusine's character showed itself at once. She recommended him to "play possum"—to mount his horse and go quietly back to Poictiers, as if nothing had happened. The hunt had been scattered, the various members would drop in singly, and when the body of the count was found, the carcase of the dead boar would explain the catastrophe. Escaping one difficulty, Raymond plunged into another. He fell violently in love with the beautiful fairy, and, after following her recommendation to obtain of his kinsman as much ground around the fountain as could be enclosed by a stag's hide (*Dido rediviva*), was wedded to her in the magnificent palace erected on the piece of ground so craftily obtained. On the wedding day, Melusine made him reiterate a previous promise that he would on no account seek her on a Saturday, and the enamoured knight confirmed his pledge with many oaths and declarations of eternal love.

For a while all went well. Melusine increased the size of the castle and added to its fortifications, and named it after herself, Lusinia or Lusignan. The love of Raymond for his beautiful wife survived the appearance of a large family, and Melusine might have gone down to her grave in peace, had it not been for her husband's relations. The Count de la Forêt, his brother, was always hanging about Lusignan, and apparently endeavouring to poison Raymond's mind against his wife. One Saturday, he rode over post-haste to Lusignan, and after dinner inquired for Melusine. Raymond simply said that his wife was busy on Saturdays, but would be glad to entertain him on the morrow. This did not of course satisfy a brother-in-law, who straightway said that the country was full of curious stories concerning Melu-

sine, and that her absence on Saturdays was by some attributed to a gallant, and by others to the practice of witchcraft. Hereupon, Raymond, like a fool, got into a terrible fury, and rushing into his wife's apartments, came at length to an iron door. Drilling a hole in this with the point of his sword, he peeped through, and beheld Melusine in an immense bath, changed from the waist downwards into a serpent. When he saw this sight, his heart smote him, for he recollects him of his oath. With some difficulty he restrained himself from killing his brother on the spot, and gave way to terrible lamentations, for he well knew that he must now lose the beautiful wife who had been his chief glory and delight. Some time passed without any sorrow coming upon him, till one day news came to the castle that one of the sons of Raymond and Melusine, called Geoffrey Big Tooth, had attacked and burned a monastery and a hundred monks, among whom was his own brother Froimond. On hearing of this crime, the father exclaimed to Melusine, who was endeavouring to console him, "Away, false serpent, contaminator of my honourable race!" At this unmerited reproach, Melusine fainted, and having been at length "brought to," embraced her husband tenderly. A very touching scene now occurred, in which Melusine displayed great beauty and elevation of character, and finally bidding her husband adieu, fled through the window of the castle, leaving the imprint of her foot upon the window-sill, then changing into a serpent, flew three times round the castle she had built, uttering "such heartrending cries that every one wept for pity," and amid a frightful storm of thunder and lightning, finally disappeared.

In compiling his romance, Jean d'Arras clearly did not confine himself to the Melusine traditions alone, but used up any other mediæval legends which came to hand. *Palatina* shut up in the mountain, bears a singular resemblance to the daughter of Yporcas; and *Meliora*, in her Armenian castle, is the well-known Lady of the Sparrowhawk, mentioned by many early travellers. It is also patent that in the histories of *Pressina* and *Melusine*, he tells the same story twice over. Nevertheless, the beauty of great part of his work makes ample atonement for some confusion and a few repetitions, and it would be difficult to find a more favourable

specimen of mediæval romance, than the Melusine of Jean d'Arras.

Those possessed of special critical acumen resolve the founder of the great house of Lusignan into a mere myth, and Mr. Baring Gould gets rid of Melusine ingeniously enough. She was a water-fairy, a siren, a mermaid. The demi-fish is as old as the hills and the fountains. Our old friend Dagon of the Philistines, and the Mexican god Coxeox, were both fish-gods, with finny lower extremities. These figures indicated the sun, which, according to ancient cosmogony, passed one half of his time above the earth, and the other half in the sea, into which he disappeared nightly. Rejoicing in the name of Dagon, On, Oannes—why not Johannes, John, or Jack?—this deity was represented on Assyrian seals as half-man, half-fish, and this curious figure is the primeval progenitor of all sirens, mermaids, and lamiae whatsoever. It may be objected to this theory, that Melusine was not a mermaid, but a true snake-woman; but a still more fatal bar exists to this resolution of the difficulty. It is that in referring lamiae as well as mermaids to Dagon or the Sun, the mythists have completely overlooked the very important point that the serpentine form is, in most of these legends, imposed by a higher power upon a fairy or demi-goddess during a certain term of punishment. In the Melusine story, the colubrine transformation is inflicted by a fairy mother on her child, condemned to expiate in that shape her crime against her father. In the far East this identification of the serpentine as an expiatory form is so distinct as to admit of no possible doubt: the transformation in the Chinese version being not partial but complete. *Pih Shay tsing Ke* (The History of the Spirit of the White Snake) is a Chinese romance founded, precisely like the story of Jean d'Arras, upon a popular legend; the only difference being that the events narrated by the Frenchman were supposed to be comparatively recent, while the Chinese tradition dates from remote antiquity.

According to the legend, a woman is compelled by Fo to wear the form of a white snake, in order to expiate during centuries the faults of her previous life. At the end of eighteen hundred years the god decides that the star Wen-sing (the star of literature) shall descend upon earth, and receive the highest honours. The woman is allowed to resume her mortal

form and to marry one Han-wen, in order to give birth to Wen-sing. After passing through innumerable difficulties and adventures, during which she meets a blue snake expiating crimes like herself, she brings Wen-sing into the world, and is then buried under the pagoda of Loui-pong. Twenty years after, when she has fulfilled her term of expiation, she is raised up to heaven. I have reason to believe that this story is little known to collectors of folk lore, although it was long ago presented to them by the learned Stanislas Aignar Julien, and I therefore make no apology for introducing it as a new element of interest in reference to the legend of Lusignan.

The story of Melusine has, of course, been explained in various realistic fashions. Michelet, with that splendid disregard for facts which is eminently characteristic of his countrymen, declares the "true Melusine made up of contradictory natures," to have been Eleanor of Guyenne, "the mother and daughter of a diabolical generation. Her husband punished her for the rebellion of her sons, by holding as a prisoner in a strong castle her who had conferred upon him such vast possessions."

It is not impossible, however, that an easier explanation of the Melusine story may be found. It is clear that she was a Scotch lassie, uniting the beauty of a woman with the wisdom of a serpent, a sort of north-country Haidee, the daughter of Mac Lambro—a fine old pirate of the period, and a direct ancestor of Sir Andrew Barton, the loss of whom, with his ship and pinnace, brought about the battle of Flodden Field. She was foolish enough to marry a Frenchman, and endowed him with great wealth in gold and ships. She was therefore a sea-daughter, and invested by the yokels of Poitou with marine attributes. Building castles for her lord, she, by degrees, acquired great sway in the country, till she got old, when her husband began, like a shabby foreigner, to check her accounts and otherwise vex her life. One fine day this treatment became unbearable, and she took ship to Scotland and refuge among her own kindred. Her departure had to be explained somehow, and her shabby husband therefore invented the snake story to cover his own delinquencies, and justify him in ill-treating his children. As Mrs. Grandy says, "these foreign marriages seldom turn out well."

A BROKEN LILY.

SHE stood beneath the linden's lengthening shade,
Fair English Lily, chaste and calmly glad;
False Hope her maiden trust had ne'er betrayed,
Nor Memory made her stainless bosom sad.
For still, in that serene and guileless breast,
Sweet Love and steadfast Faith abode, as one;
So waited she, alone, in perfect rest,
As sleeping flowers await the climbing sun.

"He left me when the lily last was white,
And now again it blossoms. Happy flower!
His honey-lips shall touch thy cup to-night,
Where now I press it. Happier I, a shower
Of so sweet kisses waiting! Waiting? Dear,
I chide not thee, nor the slow-loitering days.
They have left no shadows, for the hour is here
That brightens all with its meridian rays.
"Sweet lily! Lo, he set thee for a sign
Between us; and my heart is wholly clear
Of one disloyal wandering thought, as thine
White chalice is of stain. I should not fear
Could he so search my soul as one may scan
This chaste cool cup. Should one not wholly
shame

To lay on Love's pure altar other than
The perfect gift that fits its puréed flame?"

The linden shadows lengthened. Still she stayed
The lily at her lips, which tremulously
Shook from their soft repose. The deepening shade
Crept down the primrose of a cloudless sky.
Was it dim eve that drove the happy rose
From that sweet face? Stars shook in night's
blue dome,
And still she stood, that lily clasped close
To a cold heart, and murmured, "he will come."
But he came never. All the lilies died.
And strew'd the sullen earth with sad shed leaves.
Not the new year's new rose, in all its pride,
Could gladden her again. As one who grieves
So gently that the sorrow seems new sweetness,
She paled and slowly passed. On her dead breast
They laid a lily, type in chaste completeness
Of a pure heart now sunk to perfect rest.
She lies beneath the yew-tree's changeless gloom.
Her gentle soul, left of its comrade, Love,
Went seeking him beyond the undreaded tomb,
And finds him far, in fairer fields above.
While one who loathes the leaden, lingering years,
Creeps sadly on through life, unloved, alone,
Bathing with sorrow's unsaviling tears
The broken lily sculptured on her stone.

MARIGOLD.

A ROMANCE IN AN OLD GARDEN.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"As great a beauty of a rose as ever I seen in my born days!" said old Peter Lally, straightening his bent back, and gazing tenderly at the exquisite bloom, which was the product of his skill. "To think that the likes of it must ever and always be sold to the stranger, and never a master or mistress at Hildebrand Towers to take pride out o' it!"

The old gardener sighed impatiently, and gazed around on the mossy lawns, glowing parterres, and verdant slopes fringed with flowers, which had been to him as a little kingdom for sixty years. Every-

thing was in perfect order, not a leaf nor a pebble out of its place; even the ivy on the walls of the Towers was clipped trim and close, and the urns on the quaint old balustrade were blazing with oleanders. No one could have supposed that Hildebrand Towers had been long almost as deserted and forgotten by the world, as the far-famed palace of the Sleeping Beauty.

A young woman was walking slowly through the deep purple-green shade of an ancient mossy avenue, that led up from one of the entrance-gates towards the gardens of the Towers. For years no wheels had cut the soft green turf under her feet, over which the trees met and the sunbeams flickered. Behind the solitary figure the path lost itself in a rich gloom, and there was a dreamy mystery in the air, as the girl moved slowly and thoughtfully through the solitude. The thrush uttered a few lazy notes, and a blue dragon-fly perched on the feathery grass; but no other sound or movement disturbed the stillness of the spot.

The girl's graceful figure was clothed in a gown of homely print; a faded scarlet shawl was folded across her bosom, and tied loosely round her waist; her coarse straw bonnet had fallen backward on her shoulders, leaving uncovered a ripe sunburned face, and golden head. She carried a large round basket, which dragged upon the turf as she walked. Leaving the avenue, she threaded a maze of winding paths, and opened a little green door in the high jasmine-covered wall of a vast old-fashioned garden, where roses and tall lilies sheltered under apple-trees, and where the rich perfume in the air accounted for the enthusiastic humming of the bees.

"Peter!" she cried, "Peter Lally, I am come to see you!" and went calling on, by peach-covered walls, under ripe pears that hung down to her mouth, picking her steps between musk and lavender, and startling flights of butterflies from the hearts of the moss-roses.

"Why, it's Marigold," replied the old man, at last rising suddenly out of the raspberry bushes; "and glad I am to see your purty face afther the night's dhramin I had about you! I thought the Masther of Hildebrand Towers had come home to us at last, and brought a bride with him; and I met the lady walkin' among the flowers, an' a white

satin gown upon her; an' when I looked at her again, I saw it was Marigold! 'An', by the powers!' said I to myself, 'there'll be the wars of heaven an' airth when Ulick hears of this!' An' I let a screech, an' took to my ould heels!"

The girl laughed.

"You might have waited to see where I was going," she said; "for sure I am that I was running away too. Your master, whoever he is, would be a bad exchange for my Ulick, Peter Lally."

"It's aisy to talk," said the old man, shaking his head, "when the masther's not to be seen—I wish he wus! Not that you would be a match for him, Marigold, my girl; for the Hildebrands is a fine, mighty family, an' must marry as sich."

"You needn't say so much about it, Peter. I belong to Ulick, and, if I were a Hildebrand, I would marry him all the same. As I am only a poor girl, no Hildebrand, in a dream or out of a dream, could tempt me to give him up."

"It's the right kind of love," said the old man, solemnly. "Stick you to that; an', take my word for't, everything you plant'll grow."

"But I get all my plants ready made, you know, Peter; besides, as you say, there is no Mr. Hildebrand, and so we needn't fight about him."

"He's somewhere," said Peter Lally, sticking his spade in the ground and leaning on it meditatively. "Hildebrand Towers isn't waitin' all these years, so neat and so beautiful, for nobody. Many's the time I tould you of the lovely Kate Hildebrand, that married a poor man, and was cut off by her family. That woman had childher, whatever come of them, an' sure I am that a grandson o' her's 'll come walkin' in to us some fine mornin', with the Hildebrand mark as clear as prent on his face."

"May be so," said Marigold; "but he's a long time coming, and I like the place very well as it is. Perhaps I couldn't get my plants so easily, if a flock of grand people were always sweeping in and out of the gardens."

Peter left his spade standing, disengaged his thoughts from the fortunes of the Hildebrands, and proceeded to fill the basket which the flower-girl placed before him. Long ago Peter Lally had given a wife and children to the earth, and in return the earth had given him beautiful creatures to comfort his loneliness: stout trees of his own rearing, and fair lilies and

roses, whose innocent loveliness had filled the void in the old man's heart. Over and above his devotion to his calling, the gardener cherished two prominent ideas in his mind. One was a loyal attachment to the family, in whose service he had toiled for sixty years. His father had been gardener at Hildebrand Towers, and at sixteen Peter, spade in hand, had entered the gardens where he had since remained to see the oaks spreading, the ivy thickening, and the Hildebrands coming into the world and going out of it. They were a singular family—handsome, adventurous, and remarkable as having often been the subjects of the strangest freaks of fortune. The first Hildebrand had come from some northern country over the seas, having first married the widow of an Irish merchant, who had been his partner in trading to the Indies. After her second marriage the lady inherited this property in her own country, and from some distant sea-girl town came sailing with her foreign husband to take possession of it. Story-tellers related how Hildebrand the first brought a chest of gold with him, which had to be carried up the staircase by six stalwart men. However that may be, there was certainly great wealth in the family, and when the last owner of Hildebrand Towers died, a childless widow, she left a large fortune behind her, for which no heir had as yet been found. The deceased old lady, good friend and beloved mistress of Peter Lally, had firmly believed that there were Hildebrands in existence who might yet appear and claim their own; and by her will she had arranged matters so that until the rightful heir should appear, everything must be kept in good order in the house and grounds, as though the master were expected from hour to hour. For years this state of things had been going on at the Towers: the gardens were trim, the house was swept and garnished. People sometimes came out of curiosity to inspect this waiting home, and ask questions about the family; but the watched-for owner had not yet walked in at the gate, and the world had grown tired of expecting him. Peter Lally was the only person who believed that the expectations of his departed mistress with regard to the heir would be realised. Most people shook their heads incredulously when they were spoken of, and looked for the day when the property would be divided among distant connections of the family.

The other prevailing sentiment of Peter's mind was a tender interest in the fate of Ulick and Marigold, who had long looked on him as a friend. The fortunes of these two young people were singularly alike: each was alone in the world, and a certain sympathy, sprung from this circumstance, had drawn them together. Marigold was the child of a poor gentleman, who had come, sick and a stranger, to a roadside cottage, standing between Hildebrand Towers and the town of Ballyspinnen; and had there died, leaving his little daughter alone among the cottagers. The child remembered that she had come a long journey over the sea, and had lived in many different places; but she knew of no friend that she had possessed except her father. She grew up a waif among the poor, and was supported, out of charity, till such time as she was able to provide for herself. She had picked up a little education, could write a good hand, and spoke and carried herself with a certain natural dignity and refinement. Almost from the first, old Peter Lally had taken an interest in her, paying her small sums for weeding flower-beds, and making many an easy job for her small fingers, in order that she might early taste the sweets of independence. As she grew older, he instructed her in the art of gardening, and taught her to make an honest livelihood by selling plants and flowers in the town. Marigold (as the old man had named her, because her name was Mary and her hair like gold) had her special customers in Ballyspinnen, whose greenhouses and window-gardens were entrusted to her care. Her own home was a tiny, spotless room, in a cottage, half-way between the gardens and the town, and was wont to contain little besides Marigold herself, her flowers, and a few sunbeams. When, some four or five years ago, Ulick had arrived, a tall, awkward youth, to seek his fortune in Ballyspinnen, the happy, flower-crowned face of little Marigold had met him on the high road with the smile of a friend. Friendless, travel-soiled, and hungry, he had fallen in despair by the wayside, when she had shared her dinner with him, and placed all her little money in his hands.

Ulick was now a clerk in a business-house in the town, having risen from the post of messenger; but, then, he was only a vagrant who had ventured forth from a workhouse, determined to fight his way in the world. The friendship made between

pity and gratitude on the high road had never been broken, and the years which had made man and woman of these two had endeared them to one another with a love that was everything to each.

"Let the basket stand here, Peter Lally," said Marigold; "for I want to go round to Poll Hackett, and see my chickens." And Peter returned to his spade; while, by many winding paths, Marigold reached the back of the old house, where, at an open window, sat the house-keeper of the Towers at her needle-work, with one eye on the poultry-yard and the other on a neighbouring kitchen-garden. Poll Hackett was a buxom, lively widow, as fond of variety in her thoughts and opinions, as of colours in the pattern of her dress. It was a real pleasure to her to change her mind, and a still greater pleasure to invent and explain her admirable reasons for doing so. As she had many lonely hours, sitting in the vacant old house in hourly expectation of an imaginary master, she must have been sadly in need of occupation for her active mind, had it not been for this talent of constructing and demolishing, and reconstructing her beliefs and opinions on all matters that came under her notice. Whether or not the race of Hildebrand should be looked upon as extinct, was a question upon which she was never weary of ringing the changes; and her feelings of friendship towards Peter Lally fluctuated with her convictions on this subject. After a long gossip with Peter over the matter, she returned to her solitary sewing, inflamed with ardent expectation of the coming of the unseen and unknown being in whom the old man put his faith. She had been even known to go so far as to air the sheets in the handsomest bedchamber, and fill the larder with provisions, which she herself had been afterwards obliged to consume. At such times as this, her affection for Peter Lally was as lively as her sympathy with his sentiments; and the only fault visible to her in his character, was a too great carelessness in his preparations for so great an event as the arrival of the master of Hildebrand Towers.

"There you go," she would cry, "landin' off the flowers to yon girl, to be scattered over the country, instead of makin' your greenhouse shelves look handsome for the man that owns them. He'll take you at a short yet, Peter, an' I wouldn't wonder if it was this very night of all nights that he

would come walkin' in, axin' for his dinner; an' never a bokay you'd have to put on the table."

"Aisy, woman, aisy!" Peter would say; "he won't come just that sudden but what we'll have time to dig the potatoes and lay the cloth."

The next day, however, Poll Hackett was sure to be in a state of irritation, because the sheets had been aired in vain, and she had made an unnecessary sacrifice of her favourite pullet. Before evening she was sure the master was dead, and would never appear, and the next day she was certain he had never been born. Having adopted this view of the question, she at once set to work to invent her reasons for having done so; by the end of the week she was ready to die for her faith in the utter extinction of the race of Hildebrand from the earth; and the next time Peter Lally came in her way, she tossed her head in disdain, and would scarcely speak to him.

This variable dame now met Marigold with smiles of welcome, and fluttering out to the poultry yard in gown of brilliant stripes, and flowing cap-ribbons, proceeded to count six little gold-feathered chickens into the young girl's lap.

"They'll be quite a little fortune for you towards house-keeping," she said; "but you mustn't handle them too much. Come into the house and rest yourself a bit. Sure it's as good as my own house to ask anyone I like into, for it was only yesterday I made up my mind that there will never be master nor mistress here but myself."

"Take me up to the handsomest rooms then," said Marigold; "for I have a fancy to walk through them this evening."

Poll led the way, and Marigold's auburn head glimmered along the old brown winding passages, which brought them to the front of the house. The flower-girl took her way through the old-fashioned but beautifully-kept chambers, walking solemnly round the dining-room, with its dark panels and shining bronzes, and studying the faces of the dead Hildebrands that gleamed out of the twilight on the walls, intensifying the air of solitude in the place with the fixed gaze of their lack-lustre eyes. She visited the drawing-room, with its long polished floor, queer old china, and faded satin furniture, stepping lightly, and touching delicate ornaments softly with her finger-tips, as if she liked the contact with anything

that was dainty and refined. Poll Hackett hurried her on, however, to a certain wardrobe chamber, where hung many rich gowns and draperies, which were the housekeeper's pride and delight. Poll was glad of any excuse to shake these out and admire their varieties, and she now threw a rusty satin robe over Marigold's peasant dress, hung a tarnished gold-striped Indian shawl upon her shoulders, and a veil of coffee-coloured lace upon her head. Seeing her reflection in a long antique glass, Marigold caught the spirit of the fun, laughed merrily, snatched up a huge spangled fan, and swept about the room with a comic assumption of dignity.

"It's a quare long time," cried Poll, enraptured, "since satin tails whisked over yon stairs to the draw'n'-room. Come down, Lady Madam! come down! and let the poor ould gimeracks see the sight of a mistress among them again!"

Marigold laughed and obeyed; and in a few minutes she was walking up and down the deserted drawing-room, giving mock commands to Poll, in a voice and with a manner that made the housekeeper stare.

"Well, well!" gasped Mrs. Hackett at last, wiping her eyes, "it's in the blood, I suppose. See what it is to be come of gentlefolks."

"I'm tired of it, Poll," said Marigold, pulling off her veil, "and I don't want to be reminded that I come of gentlefolks. I belong to poor folks."

She sat down on a couch, and gathered up the Indian shawl on her arms; the fun had dropped away from her with her veil, and she sat now gazing before her with an abstracted look on her face.

"I don't know where it comes from," she said, "or what it means, but I feel now as if I had surely worn clothes like these before, and sat in a chair like this, and wrapped such another shawl about my shoulders. It never could have been me; perhaps it was my mother, though I do not remember her, or know anything about her. Here, Poll Hackett," she said, throwing off shawl and gown and flinging them to the housekeeper, "take these, and never make such a fool of me again!"

Marigold walked out of the house and back to the gardens, where Peter Lally put the basket of plants on her head, bade her good evening, and closed the garden gate behind her.

She was crossing a mossy glade, which formed a green terraced recess between two groves of ancient trees, when she saw a figure coming to meet her. It was Ulick, who took the basket from her head, saying—

“I hope I shall soon take it down for good. Let it stand here a little, while we enjoy ourselves.”

“You must not despise my flowers, or I shall think you are ashamed of me.”

“You shall have as many as you please in your little garden and in your windows, but you shall not wear them any more upon your head.”

He took her hand, and they sat upon an old moss-eaten stone seat under shelter of a venerable sun-dial, the roses and geraniums at their feet. Ulick had a fine, intelligent face, and a look of manly independence in his bearing; he did not seem famished, nor miserable, nor dispirited now.

“Ah, Ulick,” said Marigold, “when I see you looking every day more and more like a gentleman, I often wonder how you content yourself with me.”

“And oh, Marigold,” said Ulick, “when I remember the day you gave your dinner on the road to a poor ragged boy, I can hardly believe that you, who are come of gentlefolks, do not eat my acquaintance.”

“But you are come of gentlefolks yourself, Ulick.”

“And that is the only thing that interests you about me?”

“Oh, Ulick!”

“Come, come, my love! let us trouble ourselves no more about those who are dead and buried, and as unknown to us as to the rest of the world. We were well met, and we have been and are going to be very happy. I have seen a little cottage that will suit us exactly, and in a few weeks more——”

“You can’t afford it yet, Ulick.”

“But I can, Marigold; I have got a rise in my salary, and I can, and I will.”

ENGLISH CATHEDRALS.

WINCHESTER.

FROM all the six principal approaches to the ancient city of Winchester there are glimpses of the old cathedral. The best are those from the hill road to Portsmouth, past the Downs, across the vale of Chilcomb, and from the Romsey side of the road. When you stand at these stations and look at the cathedral, you are looking at an ancient British city.

By the early Celtic invaders, who found their way here from Porchester, the forest-circled city was called by the bright and rejoicing name of Caer Gwent, or “the White City,” and from thence, one after another, fresh swarms of Celts were, it is supposed, alternately sent to found and people Winchester, Dorchester, and Shaftesbury. When those two martial brothers, idealised by Shakespeare in his *Cymbeline*, *Guiderius* and *Arviragus*, rebelled against *Claudius*, according to *Matthew of Westminster*, *Claudius* was besieged by the Britons at Winchester. At the close of *Vespasian’s* campaign in England, his successor, *P. Ostorius Scapula*, who defeated the *Cangi* and *Silures*, fortified Winchester in the good old mathematical Roman way. The site of the summer camp used by the Roman garrison of Winchester is still to be seen on Catherine Hill, a mile from Winton. It was a strong isolated fort, with the river on one side, and the Roman road leading from Winchester to Porchester on the other. There are still traces to be seen of such old Roman roads between Winchester, Silchester, and old Sarum. *Arviragus*, that sturdy Guerilla chief of these early British wars, being at last finally defeated in North Wales by the Romans, was given up by the *Brigantes*, and sent in chains to Rome. *Claudius*, struck with his invincible courage and pride, generously gave the Celtic champion his liberty, and sent him back to reign in England—the province of the *Belgiæ* being his dominion, and his capital Winton, not Gloucester, which the grateful *Arviragus* had built, and which he had christened in honour of his conqueror *Claudius*, i.e., *Claudiocastra*. This *Arviragus* of Shakespeare is, our readers should be reminded, the *Caradoc* of our old Welsh bards and the brave *Caractacus* of ordinary English history. Thenceforward *Arviragus* rechristened himself *Tiberius Claudius*—King and Legate of the august emperor in Britain and conqueror of the *Cogidubni* (people of Gloucestershire).

The fiery insurrection of *Boadicea* followed, and Winton would soon have fallen before her knives and scythes, had not *Parlinus*, the Roman Proprator, stopped her march forward by lopping down eighty thousand of the infuriated Britons. That Amazonian heroine, that Celtic *Joan of Arc*, was buried, it is said, at Wilton. This daughter of *Caractacus*, alias *Caradoc*, alias *Arviragus*, was praised for her beauty

and virtue by Martial, and with her husband, the senator Pudens, is commended by St. Paul in one of his epistles, as eminent among the saints. The son of Arviragus was Marius; the son of Marins was Coilus (old King Cole), and the son of old Cole, Lucius, the first Christian king of the world. This Lucius, we may observe, was called by his Wiltshire subjects, "The Great Light."

The special legend of Winchester cathedral, however, refers not to these half-apocryphal early British kings, but to Alfred's honest friend and adviser, Saint Swithin.

St. Swithin shared with St. Neot the glory of educating our Alfred. He was chancellor under Egbert and Ethelwolf, and "to him," says Lord Campbell, "the nation was indebted for instilling the rudiments of science, heroism, and virtue into the mind of the most illustrious of our sovereigns." He also accompanied Alfred on his pilgrimage to Rome, and became Bishop of Winchester; a learned, humble, and charitable man without a doubt; a devout champion of the Church, and munificent in building, like most of the prelates of that time.

St. Swithin figures in our Protestant calendar as the Jupiter Pluvius of our Saxon ancestors—we will come to the story by-and-by—and, in this character, says a clever writer, "perhaps a water-spout would be his most appropriate attribute; but he has still graver claims to reverence. He ought to be conspicuous in a series of our southern canonised worthies, bearing the cope, mitre, and pastoral staff as a bishop, and the great seal as chancellor; and, thus distinguished, he should be placed in connection with the kingly Alfred, the wise St. Neot, St. Dunstan the skilful artificer, and St. Ethelwald the munificent scholar."

Among the notable miracles alleged to have been worked by St. Swithin is this—that after he had built the bridge at Winchester, a woman came over it with her lap full of eggs, which a rude fellow broke, but the woman showing the eggs to the saint, who was passing at the time, he lifted up his hand and blessed the eggs, "and they were made whole and sounde." To this may be added another story—that when the saint's body was translated or removed, two rings of iron, fastened on his gravestone, came out as soon as they were touched, and left no mark of their

place in the stone; but when the stone was taken up and touched by the rings, they of themselves fastened to it again.

In the year 865, says a second miracle-monger, St. Swithin, Bishop of Winchester, to which rank he was raised by King Ethelwolf the Dane, dying, was canonised by the then Pope. He had specially desired to be buried in the open churchyard, and not in the chancel of the minster, as was usual with other bishops, and the request had been complied with; but the monks, on his being canonised, taking it into their heads that it was disgraceful for the saint to lie in the open churchyard, resolved to remove his body into the choir, which was to have been done with solemn procession on the 15th of July. It rained, however, so violently on that day, and for forty days succeeding, as had hardly ever been known, which made them set aside their design as heretical and blasphemous; so, instead, they erected a chapel over his grave, at which many miracles were said to have been wrought.

In Poor Robin's Almanac for 1697, an old saying, together with one of the miracles before related, is noticed in these lines:—

In this month is St. Swithin's day;
On which, if that it rain, they say
Full forty days after it will,
Or, more or less, some rain distill.
This Swithin was a saint, I trow,
And Winchester's bishop also,
Who in his time did many afeat,
As Popish legends do repeat;
A woman, having broke her eggs,
By stumbling at another's legs,
For which she made a woful cry,
St. Swithin chanced for to come by,
Who made them all as sound or more
Than ever that they were before.
But whether this were so or no
'Tis more than you or I do know;
Better it is to rise betime,
And to make hay while sun doth shine,
Than to believe in tales and lies
Which idle monks and friars devise.

The satirical Churchill, says one of Hone's clever writers, also mentions the superstitious notions concerning rain on this day:—

July, to whom the dog-star in her train,
St. James gives oysters, and St. Swithin rain.

The same legend is recorded by Mr. Brand, from a memorandum by Mr. Douce; "I have heard these lines," he says, "upon St. Swithin's day:—

St. Swithin's day, if thou dost rain,
For forty days it will remain;
St. Swithin's day, if thou be fair,
For forty days 'twill rain no mair."

Ben Jonson, in *Every Man out of his*

Humour, has a touch at almanac wisdom, and on St. Swithin's power over the weather:—

Enter SORDIDO, MACILENTE, HINE.

SORD. (*looking at an almanac*). O rare! good, good, good, good, good! I thank my stars, I thank my stars for it.

MACI. (*aside*). Said I not true? 'Tis Sordido the farmer—a boar and brother to that swine was here.

SORD. Excellent, excellent, excellent! as I could wish, as I could wish! Ha, ha, ha! I will not sow my grounds this year. Let me see what harvest shall we have? June, July, August?

MACI. (*aside*). What, is't a prognostication raps him so?

SORD. (*reading*). The xx., xxi., xxii. days, rain and wind; O, good, good! the xxiii. and xxiv., rain and some wind; the xxv., rain, good still! xxvi., xxvii., xxviii., wind and some rain; would it had been rain and some wind; well, 'tis good (when it can be no better); xxix., inclining to rain; that's not so good, now; xxx. and xxxi., wind and no rain? 'Slid, stay; this is worse and worse; what says he of St. Swithin's? turn back, look, St. Swithin's, the xv. day—variable weather, for the most part rain, good. For the most part rain; why, it should rain forty days after, now, more or less; it was a rule held afore I was able to hold a plough, and yet here are two days no rain; ha! it makes me muse.

And Gray alludes to the same superstition in these lines:—

Now, if on Swithin's feast the welkin lours,
And every penthouse streams with hasty showers,
Twice twenty days shall clouds their fleeces drain,
And wash the pavements with incessant rain.

At the time of the Heptarchy, when England was slowly consolidating into one powerful kingdom, the cathedral city of Winchester was a place of such importance that, when Egbert conquered Cornwall, drove back the Welsh, and overthrew the Mercians on the banks of the Wily, his first act, after he became sole monarch of England, was to turn Winchester into his capital and metropolis, and, in Winchester cathedral, he was solemnly crowned "King of all England." But fresh troubles awaited the conqueror and master of England. The savage Norsemen cast their hungry swarms upon our shores: their black sails began to appear at Southampton, Portland, in Devonshire, the Isle of Thanet, Northumberland, and Lincolnshire. In one year alone of Ethelwolf's reign, three bloody battles were fought with the savage invaders at Rochester, Canterbury, and London; and Ethelwolf himself was defeated off Charmouth in a fierce struggle with thirty-five sail of the Pagan enemy. In this battle it was that Herefrith, the Bishop of Winchester, and another warlike Saxon prelate were slain. This unfortunate bishop was the successor of the great St. Swithin, to whom Egbert had

confidently entrusted the education of his son Ethelwolf. It was the dread of these Danish hordes, the robber colonists of the frozen yet teeming north, that induced King Ethelwolf to grant a charter, with special privileges, to priests, in approval of which pious concessions the Bishop of Winchester for the time being set apart every Wednesday of the week, as a day of general supplication to God against the Danes. This charter, at first confined to Wessex, was, in 851, at a council of the lesser states, held at Winchester, extended to all the other Anglian and Saxon nations.

It was in a lull during these fierce forays of the Norsemen, that the Bishop of Winchester made a pilgrimage to Rome, taking with him the David of King Ethelwolf's household, his youngest and best-beloved son Alfred, a child then only in his fifth year. Followed by a splendid retinue of English nobles, the boy-prince passed from cathedral to cathedral of France, and eventually visited the court of Charles the Bold, whose child-daughter, Judith, then in her eleventh year, he married.

But Winchester and its cathedral—for, after all, the history of the two is inseparable—were soon witnesses of an event more important for the future than even the throning of Egbert or the great charter of the Saxon clergy. It was in the ancient city of Winchester that the principal citizens and traders of the place formed themselves into a brotherly and defensive association, under royal sanction, and called themselves a guild, a full century before those great trade unions of the masters of capital were founded.

There is no doubt that the brave, wise, and good King Alfred loved the city where he had assumed the Saxon crown. He had royal palaces at Chippenham and Wilton, one in Somersetshire, and one in Hampshire. But Winchester—the Winton or Venta Castrum, the harbour-fort of the Romans—was the favourite residence of Alfred the warrior and the philosopher, and here he kept the public records and the celebrated Codex Wintoniensis or general survey of his new kingdom, which was, undoubtedly, a precursor of the better-known Doomsday Book of our Norman Conqueror. Here, too, King Alfred fixed his chief and central court of justice, as we find noted in the trial of certain Danish pirates who, breaking the treaty of Heddington, had again landed as rough

foragers in England. No wonder, therefore, that Asser, the chronicler, emphatically calls Winchester the royal city. All that Alfred could do for Winchester he did: he gathered there the great and wise of the land; and there, with Asser, his faithful Welsh monk and secretary, he sat in friendly converse, translating the philosophic maxims of Boetius. And when the king resolved, one day, in a pious inspiration of regretful friendship, to found a monastery to Saint Grimbald, that good French monk whom he had allured from France to conduct his new university at Oxford, Alfred chose Winchester for the site of the building, which was afterwards erected on the south side of the cathedral. And this place became the chief of the monasteries—Athelney, Shaftesbury, and St. Mary's, Winchester—that this wise and pious king erected. And when Alfred died, worn out by the cruel disease that had racked him for thirty years, he was buried in a porphyry monument in Winchester cathedral, till his own grave in the newer abbey could be completed. Edmund, a son whom Alfred had himself caused to be crowned during his lifetime, was buried in the cathedral, and his inscribed gravestone and coffin-chest are still shown. Edward, Alfred's second son, on the death of his brother, succeeded to the throne, completed his father's monastery of St. Grimbald, and endowed it with lands; and in this new minster Alfred's widow then hid her sorrow, and was in time admitted to the Church's calendar as a saint.

The first bishop chosen by King Alfred for Winchester was, so tradition says, the worthy Denewnulphus, the very herdsman of Athelney marshes in whose hut the king had sheltered when in such imminent peril from the Danes. It is supposed that Denewnulphus's wife must have died before he accepted the bishopric. He seems to have been an energetic prelate and a zealous counsellor of Alfred's. On the death of the herdsman-bishop, the king, probably impatient of all inferior persons, kept the see vacant for seven years, till the Pope threatened him with excommunication. Denewnulphus's successor, Frithsten, a pupil of St. Grimbald, behaved in a most unepiscopal way, for he resigned his see after twenty-two years, even surrendered that key, more powerful even than St. Peter's, the money-box key, and gave up the calm sunset of his days to contemplation.

Frithsten's successor was another scholar of Grimbald, a quiet charitable man, free from pride, who used to spend hours every day pacing round churchyards and praying for the dead. His successor was St. Elphege the Bald, a nephew of the mischievous St. Dunstan.

The next bishop, Elfinus, not content with that good mouthful, Winchester, secured Canterbury also, and then hurried to Rome in mid-winter to secure the Pope's blessing and assent. In crossing the Alps the snow was so deep, that the new bishop and his retinue had to kill their horses, and roll themselves up in their warm flesh. Nevertheless the bishop died, and was carried back to Winchester cathedral for interment.

Many a better man than the old saints, who had for so many centuries glorified her with light, and hymn, and incense, lies in this venerable cathedral. First and foremost among these worthies of Winchester we should place that honest fisherman, Izaak Walton, who lies in Prior Silkstede's chapel, among proud knights and nobles, whose hearts were hard as their own armour. It was, no doubt, owing to Walton's kind friend and patron, a Dr. Morley, the Bishop of Winchester, that he ended his life during the great frost in December, 1683, at the house of Prebendary Hawkins, who spread the great black marble slab, still existing, over his honoured corpse.

In the reign of Athelstane, who was a grandson of King Alfred, but despised by many of the Saxon nobles from his being illegitimate, a conspiracy was brewed at Winchester. The leader, Elfrid, being arrested, and denying all knowledge of the crime, was sent to Rome to swear his innocence at the altar of St. Peter. While repeating the oath, Elfrid fell down in a fit, and died three days afterwards at the English school in Rome. The king's brother, Edwin Athelstane, escaped on board a decidedly undermanned vessel, seeing that he had only an armour-bearer to look to sail and helm. The young conspirator, in despair at the helplessness of the vessel, soon threw himself headlong into the waves; but the armour-bearer reached the coast of France in safety. Athelstane, in remorse at the death of his rash brother, condemned himself to seven years' penance, and founded, in expiation, the Abbey of Milton in Dorsetshire.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "NO ALTERNATIVE,"
&c. &c.

CHAPTER LII. (AND LAST) CUTTING THE KNOT.

THERE is a sound of many feet pattering away in all directions as the Bellairs enter their own house. The sound is one that is very delightful in the ears of anxious parents, when they have been apart from their offspring for a long time. But a bride, entering her new home for the first time, may be forgiven for finding something jarring to her nerves, in the rush of little hurrying feet and the shrill treble of childish voices.

It is very confusing to Kate. As she enters the hall a little boy tears past her mounted on a huge walking-stick, and disappears from sight through an open door, which he bangs loudly behind him. A little girl, with a doll's cradle in her arms, advances tumultuously towards the intending mistress of the house, stares at her in silence for a moment or two, and then vanishes with a whoop, just as an irate nurse comes forward, screaming out a series of excited and unintelligible commands to her refractory charges.

"Why, they're the little Angersteins, Harry!" Kate says, hopelessly; and Mr. Corkran smiles in a friendly but respectful way, and tells her, "Yes, they are; and that they have grown much too wild for their mother to manage."

"What are they doing here?" Kate asks, turning hastily into the library. To her own chagrin, and to her husband's disappointment, she feels herself incapable of responding warmly and cordially to the hearty greetings the servants are giving her. Instead of coming back to an abode of graceful peace and quiet, she has come back to a disorderly bear-garden.

"What could have made Mrs. Angerstein send her children up here, to distract us with their noise and presence the instant we arrive?" she asks her husband impatiently, disregarding the presence of Mr. Corkran. Captain Bellairs being unprepared with a satisfactory solution of this problem, he holds his peace, and Mr. Corkran responds for him.

"I know Mrs. Angerstein told them to keep them out of the way until you had rested and she had seen you herself," he explains; "but they're wild young things, and like to have a look at everyone who comes into the house. She's got the nursery at a distance from all the dwelling

rooms, too, but they find out by magic if anyone is coming, and they're all over the house like mad in a moment."

"Got the nursery at a distance from the dwelling rooms—all over the house in a moment like mad?" she repeats in bewilderment.

"To be sure," Mr. Corkran answers, his face deepening in hue a shade or two, as he speaks; "your coming home was so sudden a thing, Mrs. Bellairs, that Mrs. Angerstein has not been able to change her residence from Lugnaquilla to her own house yet; but she has taken care to arrange it so that the children will not be the slightest annoyance to you."

The actual wrong is not a great one, perhaps, but to Kate at this juncture it is almost intolerable. She feels that it will hardly be possible for her to bear it; that it has dashed the bloom off her happiness at once; that it will corrode it altogether if it is to continue. Nevertheless, indignant, saddened as she is, she cannot help seeing that there is something ludicrous in the situation. The weaker vessel has so entirely got the whip-hand of those who are actually in power; the shallow-brained woman has so utterly defeated the clever one. Happily for them all, she sees the reverse of the shield at this juncture—the absurd side of it presents itself before her mental vision, and, to the infinite relief of both her husband and Mr. Corkran, Mrs. Bellairs begins to laugh.

"You seem to know all about her movements, Mr. Corkran," she says, good-temperedly. "When am I to have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Angerstein? As she is living in the same house, she will hardly, I suppose, wait to pay a formal call later in the day?"

Mr. Corkran fidgets, blushes, and finally rings the bell. He knows very well where Mrs. Angerstein is, but he would rather leave it to the servants to account for her.

"We had better send and say we are at home, and leave it to her to come or not, as she pleases, hadn't we, Harry?" Kate asks; and as he assents, and frames the message a shade more cordially, the servant tells them that "Mrs. Angerstein has gone to spend the day at Mr. Corkran's house."

"What a blessing for me, but what a bore for Mrs. Corkran, I should think," Kate says to her husband when the agent leaves them. "My dear Harry, this is too terrible. I have shrank appalled, to tell the truth, from the thoughts of her at

the house on the home-farm : but to be here, to be one of us, to come between us at every turn of our domestic life ! Am I unjust, am I unreasonable, when I say that I would rather never have been your wife, than have purchased the blessing of being it at this price ?

She speaks from her heart, vehemently, earnestly—jealously, perhaps, but not unreasonably. Her vehemence, and her earnestness, and her jealousy bother him considerably, but he cannot make even himself believe that they are over-strained or out of place. "If she would only take things quietly, and just accept poor Cissy—the little nuisance—as a necessary evil, we should get along all right. Heaven knows, I don't want the little woman and her flock here ; but, as she is here, it's awful that Kate will insist on making the worst of it."

So he soliloquises when he is left to himself by-and-by, while Kate makes her way over so much of the house as has not been annexed by Mrs. Angerstein. That lady has made herself very comfortable at Lugaquilla. Thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Corkran, the agent, she has had three or four rooms made to open one into the other, and certainly they form a very handsome suite. They are painted and papered to perfection, and are altogether the most comfortable and convenient rooms in the house. Quietly, and in the most matter-of-fact way, the housekeeper, who is guiding Mrs. Bellairs through her own territory, speaks of what Mrs. Angerstein does, and of what Mrs. Angerstein intends to do, until the young wife writhes within herself and says :

"It is a nightmare ! it is a nightmare ! Better fifty thousand times that he had never married me, than that he should have hampered himself with both of us."

Her house is not her own. This conviction deepens upon her hour by hour, as the day—the first day of her reign—drags itself along. At every turn she is met by some reminder of Mrs. Angerstein. Hoops are lying about in unseemly places ; a rocking-horse stands in the anteroom to the drawing-room ; abominable work-bags of striped ticking and ribbon assail her eyes ; a hairless, shivering toy-terrier (a species of dog for which she has a peculiar aversion) yelps at her at every step she takes, and she is told that he is a "pet of Mrs. Angerstein's." Altogether, she is sorely tempted to fly her married home

for ever on this the first day on which she enters it."

Captain Bellairs, going about, seeing to the state of some young horses who have come on and been broken since he left ; inspecting some new farm buildings, and looking over the state of his property generally, finds the burden of Cissy Angerstein very easy to bear. Things have prospered in his absence. Mr. Corkran has done his duty ably and well, and Captain Bellairs goes home to dinner rather inclined to chant his agent's praises.

He finds Kate up in her dressing-room, having the finishing touches put to her toilette, and in a painful state of depression. Without regarding this very much, he at once dashes into the subject that is absorbing his own interest just now.

"Things are in splendid order," he says. "That fellow Corkran is invaluable ; worth three times what he gets for the agency. During the two years he has held it he has doubled the value of the land. I must see about making him more comfortable ; that house he is in, as far as I remember, is rather small and cramped."

"I'm delighted to hear it ; to hear about the land, I mean," Kate says languidly.

"Aren't you well, Kate ?"

"Yes ; no. I hardly know what I am."

"Have you seen Cissy ?"

"Seen her ! Yes Harry ; seen her and felt her ; in fact, I am pervaded by a sense of Cissy. She came into the drawing-room, drawling out an order to one of the servants behind her as she came, and met me quite as if she were receiving me in her own house."

"What a little donkey she is, to be sure," he says, but he laughs as he says it. The annoyance is one that a man cannot gauge, it is out of his province, it seems too small a thing, and is altogether too immaterial for him to grasp at. As Kate makes no reply to his remark, he reverts to his former subject—Corkran.

"He has not neglected a single thing. The decoy had got thoroughly out of order ; and when I came to the place I let it stay as it was ; but he has had it re-stocked and drained, and put it in splendid order. He's kept the gardeners up to the mark, too ; you'll find your gardens looking very different to what they did when you saw them before you were married."

"I am glad you are so well pleased with him. Come, Harry, go and dress, and come down with me ; I feel as if I couldn't face what is below, alone."

"Does Cissy dine with us?" he asks, leisurely rising up, and strolling towards his own room. He asks the question with about the same amount of interest he would infuse into a question about the soup.

"I suppose she does; I take it for granted that she will do exactly as she pleases; she seemed annoyed at my having changed the dinner-hour from seven to eight."

He goes on into his dressing-room, and she hears him whistling and singing in a light-hearted way, which proves that he does not feel the Cissy grievance to be a bitter one. In sheer impatience with her situation, Kate goes down, and finds Mrs. Angerstein already dressed in the drawing-room, with her three children by her side.

It is not in Kate's nature to be morose or reserved with children and dogs. She takes the little things, for whom she had sacrificed and worked in the old days, upon her lap one after the other, and feels pleased and touched by the way they remember her, and fall into the habit of responding affectionately to her caresses.

"I like to have them down to dessert every day," Mrs. Angerstein says; "it humanises them, and teaches them good-manners." Then Kate observes that the little girls are in white muslin with blue sashes, and that the boy is dressed in a velvet suit. "Cissy must manage well to do all this on her slender means," she thinks, but she only says, "I think you are quite right to have your children with you as much as possible."

"They will be with me a little too much for my comfort when I have to go into that little house down there," Cissy says, grumbly nodding her head in the direction of her future home.

"I am rather anxious to see your house," Kate says, politely.

"It's little enough to see—a mere hole of a place it looks after this; but of course I must be contented with anything. Mr. Corkran has done all he can to it to make it habitable for me; but unless it's enlarged as the children grow up, I shall be stifled there."

"Harry will do everything to make it comfortable for you, I'm sure," Kate says, restraining her wrath, and trying not to look as if the end of all things were come, for just now Captain Bellairs comes in.

Cissy rises, and advances to meet him in a fluttered way, that would strike Kate as being very pretty and becoming, if Mrs.

Angerstein were advancing to meet an acknowledged lover. As it is, it strikes Mrs. Bellairs as being anything but pretty, and vastly unbecoming.

"Corkran is coming in to talk over things with me this evening," Captain Bellairs says to his wife, when the servants have left them alone with the dessert. "Shall I bring him into the drawing-room when we have done our business?"

Kate hesitates. Mr. Corkran is very suave, almost subservient in his manner. There is nothing wrong with either his dress or his grammar. He is an honourable, conscientious, straightforward man of business, and is serving her husband faithfully and well. But, brief as her personal experience of him has been, she knows he is not a gentleman, and it does seem to her rather a hard thing that she should be expected to receive him as if he were one.

"It will be putting things on a false footing if you do," she says, frankly; "his wife, probably, is no better bred than himself. It will be impossible for me to be on terms of social intercourse with her, and therefore it will be awkward to establish them with him."

"He has no wife—it's his mother lives with him," Cissy puts in; and Cissy's face grows scarlet as she offers the explanation.

"Oh! his mother, is it? Well, most likely his mother is even more impossible than his wife would be," Kate says calmly.

"He is the best and kindest friend I ever had," Mrs. Angerstein says emphatically. "You may look astonished, but I repeat it—the very best and kindest friend I ever had. You have always been generous to me, Harry; but Mr. Corkran has been more."

"He must have been kind to a fault, I should say, for Cissy to speak well and gratefully of him," Kate thinks; but she says nothing, for she has an uncomfortable feeling that she has made a mistake in that untoward remark she has made relative to things being put on a false footing, if Mr. Corkran should once be admitted to her drawing-room on terms of social equality.

Her silence is infectious. Captain Bellairs is glad to change the conversation, and more rejoiced still to get himself away from the room presently, before he can be drawn into a fresh fray. The atmosphere about these two women—the wife whom he loves most dearly, and the

old friend who has the claim of habit and dependence upon him—when they are alone together, is depressing to the last degree. "It will be miserable if this kind of thing lasts," he tells himself, gloomily, as he begins to puff a soothing cigar. "Kate is less happy than I have seen her for months, and far less satisfied than she was at Breagh Place, when she thought there was no chance of our ever coming together again; and as for Cissy! I never knew before that it was possible for a woman to make herself utterly disagreeable, and look amiable and meek at the same time."

His thoughts are turned from this moody channel, and concentrated on Mr. Corkran and business almost immediately, and in the discussion of plans that will largely increase the value of the Lugnaquilla property and aggrandise his own position in the county, the time slips pleasantly away. But it is borne in upon him strongly, delighted as he is with Corkran and with Corkran's capacity for business, that Kate is right. It would be giving him a false position to bring him into her presence on terms of social equality.

Meantime the two women are enduring each other in the drawing-room. Mrs. Angerstein is feeling almost as much aggrieved as is Kate, for Mrs. Angerstein is in possession of some secret information concerning herself which, secret as it is, ought, she fancies, to permeate the air, and influence other people in their bearing towards her. "She might be contented," the waspish little widow thinks; "she has tricked Harry away from me, and trapped him into marrying her; she needn't grudge his hospitality to me for the little time I shall need it. Poor fellow! I shall pity him when I am obliged to go and leave him alone with this disagreeable woman."

"I suppose," she says aloud presently, that you will have your friend Mrs. Durgan over here to-morrow. You are very odd about her, I think."

"Yes: in what way?" Kate asks.

"Why keeping up such a parade of friendship and intimacy with her, after you had got Harry to break off his engagement with her. Ah! you think because you told me nothing about that that I know nothing, but I have heard the whole

story since I came here. I really wonder that she likes to come here, not that I do wonder at anything she does, for I think she's an odious woman."

"I shall die of Cissy," Mrs. Bellairs says despairingly to her husband this night when they are alone. "Don't laugh, Harry; I mean it. At any rate, I can't live with her. She lowers my tone altogether; she makes me uncharitable, ill-natured, sour, suspicious—everything that I hate myself for being; she will poison my life. It comes to this," she continues energetically—"she will drive me from Lugnaquilla, or make me a miserable woman."

"She will do neither," her husband answers heartily. "Thank Heaven, she won't compel you to adopt either alternative. Corkran has taken me into his confidence to-night. He is going to marry her now in a week or two. I am sorry to say I shall lose him, for he has got a new berth that will make him a comparatively rich man—the management of an estate in England. It's a blessed stroke of luck getting rid of her. Poor Kate, it's been a near thing for you, for I doubt if I should ever have had the heart to turn the poor little thing out."

"Never mind what you would have done," Kate cries: "nothing will alter the resolve of the admirable Corkran, let us hope. Oh! I'll bear her so beautifully during these inevitable few weeks; but if she had once driven me away from you and home, I should never have come back to either."

"We've had a narrow escape of getting astray from each other, and no mistake," he says anxiously. "It's been a nearer thing than it was ten years ago. After this, don't you think we had better agree to speak out to each other before we resort to extreme measures, eh, dear?"

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